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Engaging and Serving Diverse Communities: Tualatin Hills Park & Recreation District Inclusive Outreach and Diversity Development Project Report

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Engaging and Serving Diverse Communities: Tualatin Hills Park & Recreation District Inclusive Outreach and Diversity Development Project Report

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Executive Summary

The Inclusive Outreach and Diversity Development Project is a collaboration between Tualatin Hills Park and Recreation district (THPRD) and Portland State University's Center for Public Service (CPS). The project took place between January and June 2014. The objective of the project was for the district to better understand the needs of the community it serves as well as to develop a plan for moving forward with the diversity and inclusion efforts of the district. The project also involved a review of practices and experiences from around the nation as well as a review of the composition of the community and perspectives of internal staff members. Specifically, the project had four components:

- Best Practices/Promising Practices Review
- Review of THPRD Programs
- Community Needs Assessment
- Examination of Existing Demographic and Quantitative Data

For **the best practices/promising practices review**, two methods of data collection were utilized. First, a review of literature was conducted to ground the study in current trends of research. The literature review portion informed the formation of questions for interviews and focus groups as well as aided in the development of recommendations. The second piece of the best practices/promising practices review was to conduct structured interviews with other park and recreation jurisdictions to find out what they are doing in regards to diversity and inclusion and how their efforts are being received by their communities.

In regard to **the review of THPRD programs**, documents detailing the current program offerings of THPRD were reviewed and a series of focus groups with THPRD employees were held. The staff groups included: front desk employees, program coordinators, and instructors. The program review focus groups resulted in the identification of six primary themes, which are (1) perceived accessibility issues for community members, (2) staff member needs, (3) understanding diversity and inclusion efforts at THPRD, (4) variation among centers, (5) internal communication, and (6) community partnerships.

The third area of data collection was **the community needs assessment**. This portion of the study relied on direct feedback from community members who self-identified with one of the six ethnic communities selected for this phase of the study. Six focus groups, one for each of the ethnic communities, were convened and each group was asked a series of questions about their experience with THPRD as well as their perceptions of community needs and preferred outreach and communication methods. The selection of the six groups was based on the population density of ethnic minority communities in the THPRD area. The six groups identified were: Hispanic/Latino, Korean, Vietnamese, Middle Eastern/North African, Indian, and Chinese.

While these groups do not represent the full array of ethnic groups in the district nor does ethnicity represent the only dimension of diversity, the time and resource constraints demanded a targeted data collection approach of a small subset of community members. The district's long term plan is to continue the effort to include more community voices from a variety of people with diverse experiences and backgrounds in its programming and operations.

The primary themes that were identified based on these six focus groups are (1) positive perception of the district, (2) outreach and communication strategies, (3) accessibility issues facing community members, and (4) an uneven sense of belonging. These themes emerged out of the discussions among the focus group participants prompted by a series of open-ended questions. The themes are rooted in the participant's own unique experiences with the district. Focus group discussion was used as a method of data collection because it is particularly well suited to explore people's ideas and allows for guided questioning to target specific types of information while creating the opportunity for participants to explain their views, bring up additional topics, and speak candidly and thoughtfully.

Finally, **the demographic and quantitative data review** was evaluated in light of the focus group discussions. Some trends seen in past quantitative data reports reflected observations described by focus group members, providing broader context. Focus group participants also highlighted certain activities, programs, or experiences that were not captured in the quantitative survey with the general public. It is important to pay an attention to some of the discrepancies between the focus group data and survey responses because it may indicate some specific needs of certain ethnic communities that may differ from the community at large.

Overall, the focus group members were aware of the district and many had used district facilities or programs in the past. Participants were excited to provide their opinion and point of view to support the research. Many participants asked how the report would be used, what the next steps were for their participation, how they could track the progress of diversity efforts at the district following the report, and if there are any volunteer opportunities available in connection with the diversity and inclusion effort. This indicates that the participants find the time spent providing feedback worthwhile and the efforts by the district as important for the future of the district's relationship with the community.

Below is a summary of the four primary recommendations emerging from the project. This report also includes supporting data from the program review, demographic/quantitative data review, and best practices/promising practices review which is included in the graphic below under the heading "informed by." Specific recommendations are provided as a way for the district to address the community concerns and mature in its inclusion and diversity efforts.

Theme 1: Develop Cultural Competence within THPRD

Informed by:

- Literature suggesting cultural competence as an important aspect for park and recreation organizations to develop
- Experience of staff members having difficulty communicating with community members
- Lack of clarity among staff members regarding how to demonstrate culturally competent behavior
- Conversation among staff members about what diversity and inclusion means to the district
- Confusion about rules and regulations aimed at supporting diversity and inclusion efforts

Community Observations:

- Experience of participants having difficult conversations with staff members, particularly where language or cultural barriers are causing tension
- Questioning if there will be people like themselves involved in programs, either as staff or participant
- Uncertainty over whether THPRD is a safe place for their community
- Lack of clarity surrounding rules and regulations of district due to culture or language differences
- Request for a cultural liaison for their communities to provide support

Recommendations:

- Baseline cultural competency survey of staff members at all levels of organization, followed by periodic reviews of the cultural competency levels
- Trainings and development to empower all staff members to meet three goals:
 - (1) understand why cultural competency is important as an organization
 - (2) provide education around diversity and inclusion efforts of the district, including relevant rules and regulations
 - (3) facilitate a substantive conversation about the role of cultural competency in the operations of the organization

Theme 2: Make Facilities and Services more Welcoming and Accessible

Informed by:

- Literature describing importance of accessible signs for diverse communities
- Increasingly diverse population moving into THPRD service area
- Literature suggesting role of park and recreation organizations in developing social capital
- Importance of role of language in public service delivery for park and recreation organizations
- Experience of other jurisdictions measuring success as being viewed as a safe space and appealing place to diverse communities

Community Observations:

- Challenges with language barrier and lack of information regarding district policies for non-English speakers
- Experience of not feeling welcomed by staff members upon arrival at district facility
- Request for cultural nights to share culture with entire THPRD community
- Reporting of transportation, safety, cost, and scheduling barriers to participation
- Perception of cultural differences as barriers to participation where differences are not understood or accounted for
- Request for orientation to the district

Recommendations:

- Minimize language barriers through tools like telephonic translation, translated written materials, and symbolic signage
- Provide community members information about the developments of diversity and inclusion efforts as well as meaningful opportunities to engage
- Work with volunteers to act as cultural liaisons to community members with listed availability
- Implement strategies to strengthen diversity and inclusion as part of the advisory committee policy review
- Host community parties/orientation, provide materials to new residents

Theme 3: Program Review Ideas and Opportunities

Informed by:

- Literature suggesting incorporating diverse populations into the community rather than designating as "special" programs
- Creative programming solutions described by other park and recreation jurisdictions
- Other jurisdictions measuring success based on registration and attendance
- Apparent discrepancies in opinion between the district's 2012 survey and focus group participant views
- Tentativeness among staff to implement new programs due to budget concern

Community Observations:

- Request for programmatic changes, such as women only swim sessions and increased hours for badminton
- Opportunities to integrate language experiences into community events and programs
- Appeal for more programmatic availability for transient worker population and senior population
- Suggestion for multiple levels of certain activities to allow for beginner accessibility
- Request for more advertising through modes such as email and translated ads in community newspapers

Recommendations:

- Integrate inclusive programming ideas into the regular practice of THPRD rather than as special events
- Expand timing for popular programs such as swimming and badminton
- Incorporate focus group recommendations for particular advertising and communication methods
- Provide opportunities for participation for patrons at multiple skill levels for activities that are dominated by perceived 'experts'
- Systematically evaluate participant skill development and satisfaction while simultaneously collecting demographic data

Theme 4: Strengthen Community Partnerships

Informed by:

- Literature suggesting importance of partnerships to diversity and inclusion efforts
- Experience of other jurisdictions with successful partnerships
- Emphasis on inclusionary and participatory organization in park and recreation literature
- Desire among staff members to reinvigorate partnerships with City and schools
- Challenges faced by staff when attempting to work with partners on an ad hoc basis

Community Observations:

- Participants made references to resources at churches and non-profits
- Acknowledgment of outreach opportunities through schools, apartment managers, and realtors
- Experience of learning about the district through other organizations
- Description of potential collaboration between community members as volunteers and THPRD
- Opportunity to advertise through other organizations suggested by participants

Recommendations:

- Strengthening partnerships with schools and churches, particularly related to outreach efforts
- Build partnerships with non-profits, the City of Beaverton, and Washington County to host community-wide activities
- Reach out to local organizations that already interface frequently with hard to reach populations
- Provide volunteer opportunities for community members
- Define more clearly the partnership vision between THPRD and other organizations in the area
- Form database of the current services available in the area

Background

Tualatin Hills Park and Recreation district (THPRD) has been serving its constituents since 1955 when a local physical education instructor, Elsie Stuhr, rallied residents to form the district. Since that time, THPRD has served the public by offering a wide variety of services and facilities which were developed to meet the needs and interests of the community.

THPRD has grown to include over 2,000 acres of parks, 60 miles of trails (paved and unpaved), and 6 recreation centers in addition to a myriad of other programs and facilities. The district covers 50 square miles and serves a population of 230,000 residents (THPRD, Fact Sheet 2014). Additionally, THPRD offers over 3,000 different classes per year and provides unique recreation opportunities for the community including sport fields, skate parks, and camps.

The district serves the City of Beaverton as well as a number of unincorporated areas in eastern Washington County, Oregon. This area is seeing notable demographic shifts in its population composition. The population change occurring in the district has occurred relatively quickly, resulting in a district population whose needs and preferences have also changed rapidly. Age structure, economic patterns, and ethnic and racial identification are all examples of demographic changes that have taken place in the last 10 years in the area (U.S. Census, 2010).

The Changing Community of THPRD:

- From 2000 to 2010, the district experienced a 16.4% growth, while Washington County had an 18.9% growth. Also between 2000 and 2010, the district grew from approximately 192,000 residents to 224,000 residents (PSU Population Research Center, 2012).
- During the 2000-2010 timespan, THPRD's population has become increasingly more diverse. The white non-Hispanic population declined by 7% from 2000 to 2010 (PSU Population Research Center, 2012).
- As of 2012, 1 in 8 THPRD residents is Hispanic (PSU Population Research Center, 2012).
- In 2012, approximately 24% of THPRD's residents had lived in the area for 5 years or less and 19% between 6-10 years (RRC Associates, 2012).

- Household income levels are relatively evenly spread, with 79% of the population making between \$25,000 and \$149,000 (RRC Associates, 2012).
- 76% of households in the area indicated that they currently have children or have grown children that are no longer at home (RRC Associates, 2012).
- By 2030, the THPRD area is expected to have an increase in population between 20 to 32 percent from current levels (PSU Population Research Center, 2012).
- The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that by 2016 or 2017 White non-Hispanic less than 18 years old will no longer be the majority (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012).

As the population grows and transforms over time, the demand placed on the district changes. As the community changes so too must the district adapt as part of that community.

The district is once again attempting to evolve in a way which supports with the changing needs of the community. The mission of THPRD is to “provide high-quality park and recreation facilities, programs, services, and natural areas that meet the needs of the diverse communities it serves.” In order to carry out their mission, THPRD has begun a process of developing a comprehensive strategy aimed at effectively engaging the diverse community.

THPRD has undertaken the Inclusive Outreach and Diversity Development Project as part of the effort to develop a strategy to engage diverse communities. Specifically, the project’s goals were to assess the current environment of diversity and inclusion at the district from both internal as well as external points of view and provide recommendations for the next stages of the process.

This study fits into a larger effort by the district to engage diverse populations, including:

1. In May 2012, HR Department implemented a pay differential policy favoring bilingual capacity in new front-line hires.

2. In July 2012, a Future Trends Committee identified the need to provide increased outreach and service to a diversifying community. The committee noted that it is not only the right action to take, but also it is relevant to the mission of THPRD.
3. A THPRD business plan was adopted that includes a diversity assessment study as part of its 2013-2014 budget (July 1, 2013-June 30, 2014).
4. The district's Communication Business Planning Team identified a need for an internal inclusion coordinator. That position will begin October 2014.
5. Each year THPRD, the Beaverton School district, and the City of Beaverton host an Equity Seminar Series. The three seminars take place over the course of a year and help staff develop intercultural communication skills. This training is not mandatory.
6. A language skills network among existing staff was established to aid non-English speaking patrons that arrive at THPRD facilities.
7. In 2013 THPRD, its fundraising partner the Tualatin Hills Park Foundation, and a newly formed group of community leaders known as the Champions Council established Access for All. This priority initiative guides and directs strategic fundraising toward District priorities. Access for All expands inclusive and unifying recreational activities for all members of the community. Among several themes, Access for All emphasizes services and activities for patrons experiencing language and/or cultural barriers.
8. In October 2013, brainstorming session with THPRD officials and CPS leadership took place to identify potentially productive areas for collaboration in inclusive outreach and diversity development.
9. In November 2013, THPRD co-hosted a Common Ground Dialogue event. In this event discussion with multicultural community leaders was facilitated by Mickey Fearn, former Deputy Director for National Park Service and current professor at College of Natural Resources Raleigh, North Carolina. Co-sponsored by THPRD and the Intertwine, its more than 20 attendees included members from THPRD (Board members, staff), the Intertwine Alliance, the City of Beaverton (including Mayor Dennis Doyle) the Beaverton Police Department, Beaverton School District, the Center for Intercultural Organizing, and CPS.

- Inclusive Outreach and Diversity Development Project Proposal

For this project, THPRD has partnered with the Center for Public Service (CPS) at Portland State University. CPS "provides individuals and public sector and non-profit organizations access to the intellectual resources and practical experience of the Hatfield School of Government in order to improve governance, civic capacity and public management locally, regionally, nationally and around the globe" (Center for Public Service, 2014). Due to its seat in the University coupled with the outward facing work involvement, CPS brings together academic and practitioner experience.

The Inclusive Outreach and Diversity Development Project included several components:

- Best Practices/Promising Practices Review
- Review of THPRD Programs
- Community Needs Assessment
- Examination of Existing Demographic and Quantitative Data

Best Practices/Promising Practices Review

Methods

The best practices review relied on two methods of data collection: literature review and structured interviews with other jurisdictions. For the structured interviews, members of the THPRD project team were asked to brainstorm other park and recreation jurisdictions from across the nation that would be of interest to the district. The members were then asked to call those jurisdictions and ask a series of questions (see Appendix A for list of questions). The following jurisdictions were interviewed:

Table 1 Jurisdiction and Date of Interview for Best Practices Review

Jurisdiction	Date
North Clackamas Parks and Recreation district, OR	February 14, 2014
Partnership for Parks, NY (Joint Program: New York City Parks and Recreation and City Parks Foundation)	February 20, 2014
Phoenix Park and Recreation, AZ	February 21, 2014
Wheeling Park district, IL	February 28, 2014
Willamalane Park and Recreation district, OR	March 5, 2014

Key common practices and experiences as well as unique approaches to serving diverse communities were identified in the interviews and literature. The information from this process provided the basis for the THPRD program review and community needs assessment question formation. The recommendations detailed in this report also reflect the findings of the review of the best practices/promising practices from other jurisdictions.

Best Practices/Promising Practices – Findings

Literature Review

Several key concepts which were frequently raised in the discussion of diversity and inclusion in park and recreation operations include the ideas of **participation, inclusion, multiculturalism, role of parks and recreation in social capital development**, and the importance of developing **employee cultural competence**. Literature also provided some **programing considerations** for more inclusive parks and recreation operations.

Quick and Feldman (2011) argue the importance of conceptually differentiating **participatory practices** and **inclusive practices**, noting, “enhancing participatory practices enriches the input received, while enhancing inclusive practices builds the capacity of the community to implement the decisions and tackle related issues” (p. 274). In parks and recreation operations, the service providers may need to be aware that they have to consider how to be both participatory and inclusive with diverse communities.

Scott (2000) points to several factors which hinder participation of diverse community members. He notes that sometimes entrepreneurial approaches to service delivery, that focus on maintaining a loyal customer base at the expense of new customers, can limit agencies’ ability to be more inclusive to diverse community members. He also warns that the agencies’ failure to develop a workforce that resembles the population may result in their inability to relate to diverse constituents, which limits participation by diverse community members.

Another concept frequently raised in the literature is **multiculturalism**. For example Holland (1997) described multiculturalism “as requiring appropriate consideration to be given to physical and emotional disabilities, ethnic and racial cultural diversity, as well as level of income and native languages” (cited in Anderson & Stone, 2005, p. 55). Frequently the presence of underlying “racism, sexism, ableism, anti-Semitism, classism, and homophobia” (Anderson & Stone, 2005, p. 55) can hinder achieving ideal multicultural operations. In order for public sector agencies to be participatory and inclusive with diverse communities and contribute in developing a true multicultural operation, some of these barriers need to be examined and addressed.

Scholars and community development experts argue that park and recreation agencies play an important role in **building social capital** in the community. A community with high social capital is expected to be more cooperative and resilient. Parks and recreation facilities are a gathering place for the community. By facilitating relationships in the community through interactions at parks and recreation events, facilities, or programs, park and recreation organizations can help to build social capital within the community (DeGraaf & Jordan, 2003). The social capital literature challenges park and recreation professionals to consider “What elements of our organization promote formal and informal social capital”

and “Where, when and how do we facilitate and encourage diversity in friendship” (DeGraaf & Jordan, 2003, pp. 25-26).

The literature also suggests the importance of examining park and recreation organizations internally to assess the experience of the employees working with diverse communities and make an effort to develop **cultural competence** of staff members at all levels of the organization. Anderson & Stone (2005) point out that “Just treating people equally does not necessarily lead to culturally competent programming. Cultural competency involves recognizing that there are differences and treating people equitably with those differences in mind” (p. 58).

Employees come to park and recreation districts with varying levels of cultural competence. When developing the training and development opportunities for the employees, it is important to be cognizant of the different levels of employee cultural competence.

At the organizational level, it is also important to pay attention to the make-up of the work force. As Allison and Hibbler (2004) note, language accessibility is an important aspect of organizational cultural competence that affects the experience of parks and recreation service users. They underscore the importance of hiring a diverse staff and understanding the community in which the organization is situated.

For more inclusive programming, Allison and Hibbler (2004) cautioned parks and recreation agencies against referring to programs for the ethnic minority populations as “special” programs” (p. 271). This underscored the feeling among participants that the programming was not inclusive and made them feel that they are set-apart from the dominant group.

Signage at park and recreation facilities requires attention for an inclusive operation. Some national forests incorporated symbol-based signs to facilitate better communication with non-English reading users. While there are some challenges in developing signs that are universally understood by a variety of cultural and ethnic groups (Chavez, 2008), seemingly benign structural features can have important impacts on visitors to park and recreational facilities.

Finally, there are several reports produced by other park and recreation jurisdictions which document their experience in making their operation more inclusive. For example, the Immigrant & Parks Collaborative in New York prepared a document entitled *A Guide to Immigrant Outreach in NYC Parks: A How-to Manual for Parks Groups*. In this guide, they provide examples of practices that have worked well for their needs. They emphasized the importance of partnerships, reaching new audiences through community allies, and diversifying programming (examples include: events to engage the community in park maintenance, expanding programming in music and arts, and throwing a party).

The Georgia Park Service (2012) also offered a document which describes their experience in reaching diverse populations. They examined park participation, including the reasons why some people are not participating. They found that the primary reason for not attending the park and recreation activities was due to a lack of time. This applied to all ethnic communities. White and Asian groups mentioned financial constraints as the secondary reason. Latino and Black groups mentioned distance and transportation issues as their secondary reason for non-participation. Other reasons mentioned were lack of personal interest and lack of information.

In sum, the literature suggests that park and recreation studies are only recently developing into a strong body of literature related to diversity and inclusion. There are a number of institutional, social, and structural barriers to participation in recreation activities as noted both in the academic journals as well as publications by park and recreation entities. However, there are some best practices emerging. The literature continually revisits the importance of partnerships, a diverse and informed staff, diversifying programming and eliminating barriers that reflect the norms of the dominant culture.

Structured Interviews with Other Jurisdictions

Most of the jurisdictions interviewed have a strong focus on Latino and Hispanic populations, with some exceptions. The outreach methods directed toward the Spanish-speaking community involved: using flyers translated into Spanish, encouraging Spanish-speaking families to enroll their children in preschool, seeking feedback through staff connections from cultural events, hosting events in Spanish, and advertising on T.V. channels such as Univision.

Other efforts, focused more broadly beyond the Spanish-speaking community included: organizing community cultural events, hiring bilingual staff, preparing non-verbal and non-written forms of communication, hosting ESL classes, providing scholarships for a life-guard training certification program targeted to low income neighborhoods with higher rates of drowning, changing the district fee structure to either a single fee for service or providing payment plan options to low-income residents, and spreading information through word of mouth, flyers, and community leaders.

Some of these practices were reported to be especially useful. Particularly, the following strategies seem to be working well for most of the jurisdictions interviewed:

- Translation of promotional materials with distribution through schools and churches
- Recruiting vendors to cultural celebration special events
- T.V. ads on Univision

- Partnerships with other community members and organizations
 - Partnership with Huerto de la Familia (NGO) to support new community garden, which also works as a marketing tool and feeds a database of new participants
 - Partnership with Hispanic Soccer League and have a joint city-district celebration on the day of the soccer finale
 - Partnership with neighborhood groups which can become “Friends of the Park” and host events to celebrate the local parks
- Afterschool programming targeting working families
- Life-guard training certification program for low-income neighborhoods
- Targeting activities to populations in particular areas of the district, such as Spanish movie night in areas of high concentration of Spanish-speakers
- Providing community groups with information on how to engage with the parks to encourage organic self-organizing by community members, rather than agencies setting up organized activities

On the other hand, some of the efforts that do not appear to be working as well include:

- Direct marketing of traditional programming
- Facebook as an outreach tool
- Interacting with parents in classrooms where language is a barrier
- Recruitment of patrons to special events

Additionally, interviewees were asked to describe some activities which they would like to incorporate more fully or expand. They noted the following: increased language capacity, being able to outreach more directly to the community, celebration of different heritages in children’s programs, and increasing partnership efforts.

In general, the jurisdictions interviewed provided two main measures of success. The first vision of success focused on increasing the general attendance of the programs or events. For example, one of the respondents indicated that “success is when programs and special events are appealing to diverse groups and results in interest, registration or attendance at a park district special event or program.” To assess their accomplishments, some jurisdictions tracked the number of program participants, collected observational data, or tracked the number of phone calls about a particular event. In some cases coupons were used to track attendance by recording the number that were redeemed.

The second measure of success focused on attaining better recognition of the jurisdiction by community members. One of the respondents noted that their “district wants to be well known and thought of as a safe and fun service provider by all its patrons.” To assess their accomplishments, some jurisdictions have been administering surveys to their users to gauge the participants’ experiences with the district.

The jurisdictions interviewed noted some barriers and challenges for successful multicultural outreach and inclusive programming. Some of the challenges include: language accessibility, lack of understanding about parks and recreation operations, cultural differences in preferred services (e.g. preference for family-provided child-care rather than utilizing services provided by the agencies), generational gaps, differing interests, crime, park and facility conditions. Some advice for overcoming these barriers provided by the interviewees include: taking time to work through a language or cultural barrier and partnering with the police to address safety concerns.

Review of THRPD Programs

Methods

The program review was conducted in two phases. The first was simply a review of available programmatic listing provided by THRPD to the CPS research team. The intent was to help the research team better understand the program information and structure of THRPD. This review informed the second phase of the program review which included three focus groups discussions with THRPD staff who are directly involved in program delivery. Some details of the focus group sessions are provided in Table 2, below.

Table 2 Staff Group and Date of Focus Group for Program Review

Staff Group	Date	Number of Participants
Front Desk Staff	March 4, 2014	11 Participants
Program Coordinators	March 4, 2014	9 Participants
Instructors	March 5, 2014	6 Participants

The recruitment of focus group participants was performed internally, led by the THRPD team for this project. They were asked to participate in a focus group discussion about diversity and inclusion, facilitated by PSU. Focus group discussions were moderated by Professor Masami Nishishiba of Portland State University and Jillian Girard, a graduate student at Portland State University. Two additional graduate students, Cynthia Alamillo and Lisa Durden, attended the sessions to take notes and observe the sessions. The focus groups were scheduled for two hours, although the running time of the focus groups varied between an hour and a half and two hours.

Focus group attendees were asked a series of questions with the moderator asking additional follow-up questions (see Appendix B). The sessions were tape recorded and transcribed. The transcripts were then coded using a grounded theory technique in which the transcript is reviewed for content and codes are created to describe the participant's statements. Following the coding process, the codes are grouped into themes. Each transcript was coded by two graduate students and then compared for consistency.

Focus groups were chosen for this project because the goal of the research was to gain a nuanced view of the diversity and inclusion environment at THRPD and in the community. Focus groups are designed to guide the participants through a set of questions while leaving space for new ideas to develop. This type of

research is particularly useful for exploring new topics and to “generate a rich understanding of participants’ experiences and beliefs” (Morgan, 1998). Additionally, focus groups can create a dialogue among participants that interviews or surveys are unable to replicate. It should be noted, however, that in interpreting focus group findings it only captures the subjective perceptions and observations of a small group of people who participated in the discussion. The information obtained in the focus groups may not be broadly generalizable to a larger population of interest with statistical certainty. The best use of focus group data, therefore, is to capture general themes shared across the participants with the aim to develop general understanding of key issues and ideas.

Review of THPRD Programs – Findings

The primary themes which emerged from the program review focus group discussions include the following: (1) perceived accessibility issues for community members, (2) staff member needs, (3) understanding diversity and inclusion efforts at THPRD, (4) variation among centers, (5) internal communication, and (6) community partnerships. Staff members discussed their observations of the challenges and opportunities present in THPRD’s emerging diversity and inclusion efforts, along with their own questions about how diversity and inclusion fit within the larger framework of THPRD’s mission. Participants in the staff focus groups expressed appreciation for having the opportunity to be heard by the THPRD administration and an interest in participating in future discussions.

Staff Perception of Accessibility Issues for Community Members

Participants in the staff focus groups discussed their perception of barriers to participation in THPRD programs for community members based on their experience of directly interacting with the patrons, and other sources of information in their day-to-day work. They noted six key issues as accessibility barriers for the community members. These six accessibility issues are summarized in Table 3, below, and the following section.

Table 3 Staff Perception of Accessibility Issues Affecting Community Members, by Focus Group

	Language Barriers	Cost Barriers	Scheduling/ Time	Transportation	Cultural Differences	Boundary Constraints
Program Coordinators	X	X	X	X	X	X
Front Desk	X	X			X	X
Instructors	X	X	X		X	

➤ Language Barriers

Participants in the staff focus groups expressed concerns about the language barriers community members experience as they attempt to access programs at THPRD. In order to cater to the non-native English speaker patrons, some staff members indicated the need for language translation in the courses they teach. For example one participant said,

“...it seems like I had a couple of kids that didn’t speak English. I had to try and teach them swimming lessons using my modified sign language...but the fact that we aren’t geared up for these kinds of kids, that makes teaching them swimming a little harder and a lot of these kids don’t ever take swimming lessons other than the one that we have...”

Focus group participants also considered a possible language barrier with the names of facilities and signage. They pointed out that the names of the facilities and the signage may not clearly describe the purpose of the center to non-native English speakers or to residents that are new to the area. One participant stated,

“...the center’s called the Elise Stuhr Center, [and] that says absolutely nothing about what we are. It’s a senior community center, but how would someone that just moved into the district even know?”

➤ Cost Barriers

Participants in the staff focus groups repeatedly noted the cost of programs may act as a barrier to participation for some community members. One staff member stated,

“I see that a big demographic [group] that we’re missing is people that just can’t afford our program. Is that something that we should be addressing?”

Another staff member described the perceived cost barriers for recent immigrants and the lack of awareness about cost-free programs,

"...but a lot of it is people who are new immigrants from lower income countries...and definitely – they just can't afford our programs. Or they think they can't afford our programs."

One focus group participant differentiated between actual cost barriers --- the genuine lack of ability to afford programs and activities, and a lack of awareness about the district. The focus group participant stated,

"I have people come to the front desk sometimes and...they'll say, so I've been here ten years...what's the membership fee? How do we pay to join this place?"

This observation indicates there may be a lack of awareness about the services the district offers in the community and the specific costs associated with particular programs.

➤ **Scheduling/Time Barriers**

Participants in the staff focus groups shared their observations about the role class/activity schedules and time conflicts may have in limiting the participation of some patrons. One focus group participant linked scheduling challenges with and lack of time by saying,

"There [is] nothing for working moms to bring their kids [to] after school." Another focus group participant chimed in, "It's all for stay at-home moms, but there's nothing where I can take my two year old after work at 6:00 [pm] at night. Or that I want to be involved in."

➤ **Transportation Barriers**

Another concern noted by participants in the staff focus groups were the transportation barriers which patrons might face in trying to get to and from THPRD facilities. One participant noted,

"Transportation seems to be an issue, too, for some of these populations. Even though, of course, you [have] transportation and things, it just still seems like access can be a bit of a challenge at times. Especially if they want to go across town to one of the facilities, because the only class that they can take or the time of day or whatever to get across town."

➤ **Perception of Cultural Differences**

Staff focus group participants also noted that cultural differences may be one of the reasons limiting some community members' participation in THPRD programs. For example, one participant shared the observation, noting

"...for instance, in the Hispanic population, it's not unheard of for the 12 year old brother to bring the 6 year old brother to come do the class. With our rules and regulations, [the 12 year old brother] is not old enough to be that person's [guardian]. ...that's not how their culture works, so we're telling them you need to fit within these boundaries."

This focus group participant suggested reexamining some district rules and regulations in order to see what adaptations could be made to better support patrons.

"So are we as a park district open to understanding what is important for the culture and maybe taking some of our rules and regulations and relaxing them a little bit or understanding if we want to reach out to this population, what do they need from us?"

Another participant talked about the need to reach out underserved communities to teach culturally unfamiliar activities to support public safety goals, stating,

"It always makes me sad the first 80 degree day we have, someone will drown and just looking at what their names are, a lot of times they have foreign names...we would like everyone in the world to know how to swim. We think it's a life skill, it's super important, but I don't think other cultures think that way."

Another participant reflected on finding a way to accommodate the specific cultural and religious needs of Muslim women in order to enable their participation in activities such as swimming. This focus group participant stated,

"Yeah, if we have time in our pool where no one's using and I'm just [going] to assume maybe Muslim women are very private and guarded and we [at the swim center] know we have some time where they could come and take lessons and it would be structured specifically for what would be allowed and some of the special conditions they need to have."

➤ **Boundary Constraints**

Many of the staff focus group participants reflected on the difficulties of explaining in-district fees vs. out of district fees and other costs without alienating new patrons. One participant noted,

"It's hard for a brand new person from Vermont to come over to Beaverton to learn how to get a membership, join THPRD and get involved in our activities, let alone when you're trying to explain that to somebody who doesn't speak the same language what to do...it takes time for you to gain an understanding [of] what the boundaries are, how best to explain that, residential based and tax based and all these terms

that we often use, buzz words. Even if you speak English, that can be a challenge or even for our seniors or elderly population, it's really difficult. Let alone, I can only imagine, if you don't speak the language, how much harder that would be to understand. How to even just walk in, all I [want] to do is play basketball and then you've got all these rules for that to happen."

Staff Member Needs

Participants in the staff focus groups raised five areas where they need organizational support in order to adequately meet the needs of diverse community members.

Table 4 Staff Member Needs, Responses by Focus Group

	Language Support	Training	Flexibility	Collaborative Communication	Measuring Success
Program Coordinators	X	X	X	X	X
Front Desk	X	X		X	
Instructors	X	X		X	X

➤ Language Support

Participants in the staff focus groups expressed concerns about having the ability to meet the language needs of THPRD users. One participant stated,

"If we do outreach, ...whether it's Hispanic or whatever additional outreach we're doing, are we actually prepared to receive them?"

Another participant responded,

"As someone who got the Spanish secret shopper, we are not [prepared]. I couldn't find anyone that spoke Spanish when the secret shopper came in. Not every building has somebody that can translate. Or [in] that moment in time."

Other focus group participants talked about the value of having someone on staff that was known by community members to speak their native language. One focus group participant noted,

"...people are coming in our building knowing that [a staff member] speaks Spanish. Or it's almost like [they're] becoming the go to, catch

all...people are starting to find out, you can go to a center and somebody [will] actually be able to talk to you.”

There was a discussion among staff focus group participants about using Google Translate because part-time staff members did not previously have access to Google. Focus group participants discussed the need for identifying existing internal resources for language support either in the form of technology and/or human resources. Quick and easy to use translation support services were desired by participants in the staff focus groups. One participant stated,

“It would be nice internally, too, to know who – what [the] resources are. Who speaks that language [you need translation for], so when you get that individual standing in front of you or on the phone, good customer service may involve me not being able to help them, but at least send them to the appropriate person.”

➤ **Training**

Many participants in the staff focus groups cited a need for ongoing training at all staff levels in order to adequately meet the needs of community members. Specifically, staff expressed a need for comprehensive training at all levels, including part time and temporary staff members. One participant said,

“...they provide information and training for [program coordinators] and up, but then they expect [program coordinators] to train the lower staff, but [program coordinators] don’t have that much training to [be able] to do that.”

Affirming the need for an investment in staff training, another participant noted,

“...if you put the time and resource[s] and investment into your staff you’re going to feel like [a] part of a culture...you feel like they have a level of investment in your part time staff, regular part time, full time, everybody.”

➤ **Flexibility**

Some of the focus group participants discussed the perceived risks associated with designing and implementing new or untested programs. A primary concern was on marketing new programs and meeting their necessary registration targets. One participant stated,

“My problem is that...if you [want] to offer the program, and you don’t market it, they’re not [going] to come, because after 30years of not offering something like that, nobody – as a working mom, I’m not going to look in there and say, maybe [they will have a program for me] this term?”

Several focus group participants noted the perceived risk involved with implementing new programming. One participant stated,

"If maybe one quarter your program doesn't work and nobody signs up for the [program], well then your program's shot and you would never do it again."

Another participant remarked,

"[And] if it doesn't work, I'm told don't do it next time...my whole point is that if you don't get – if you don't market it and you don't get the people to come in, then you're done with the program. So the program never has the chance to flourish with whatever demographic or culture or need you're focusing [on]."

Another focus group participant shared their perception of the risk the family assistance program brings to financing classes.

"I have a heart side and a business side to it. My heart says of course, like you said, I think it should be a lot more than what it is right now, but as it's been explained to me, there's a finite amount of money that goes into it, but we give out to anyone who qualifies? So your programs, once that money runs out, now need to recover the costs of anybody in your program who is utilizing it. It comes to a point where offering this great opportunity ends up eating the program out of existence if you're not careful about paying attention to who's registered and what are the real dollar amounts that are going into what's going on. I hate that that has to be a reality, but if the park district does want to make it real and useable, I feel like they need to address that financial part of it before they make any drastic changes."

➤ **Collaborative Communication**

Many participants in the staff focus groups discussed how helpful it was to get together and talk to peers about inclusion and diversity goals. Many participants emphasized the need to create opportunities for collaboration and communication at all levels of the organization through lateral and horizontal channels. One participant spoke of fragmented communication in the organization,

"...when we do something different, how we [can] learn from it...we are all really fragmented and not able to communicate with each other because of things set in place..."

Another participant stated,

“It would be nice if they had more of these sorts of focus groups. Even for our own benefit. To work with one another, share ideas, what are your struggles, what’s going on?”

And another participant said,

“We’re all kind of our own little island and trying to figure it out and being successful, but never having a way to really share it. Or even the time then to say, okay, what is they doing here, because you’re so busy about what you’re trying to accomplish.”

Focus group participants expressed a desire for more frequent opportunities to talk to other staff members in their function areas.

➤ **Measuring Success**

Participants in the staff focus groups talked about the need for ways to measure and determine success in implementing inclusion and diversity efforts.

Suggestions for measuring success included collecting demographic data for programs and classes and measuring social and language competencies gained by program participants over the course of a program at THPRD. One participant noted,

“And I think it should happen throughout the district in every class, a pre-assess and post-assess, because there are many things that our patrons are picking up that we’re not measuring.”

Another staff member added that soft skills in particular are important to measure at THRPD, stating,

“And when I see someone or a child that has gone from never speaking to anyone to having a little conversation, and kids don’t see that they can’t speak, you know, full phrases, but that to me, seeing that the confidence build.”

One set of focus group participants discussed the current ad hoc way of measuring competencies in the classroom and suggested developing this further as a tool to use in a manner that would allow for comparison across programs,

“But then we have our own unique little pockets of specialties that we teach and we can measure that ourselves as instructors. But the common language of how we’re meeting the needs of our community on these [soft] skills that would be the common language and piece. I think that would be really helpful to have.”

Understanding Diversity and Inclusion Efforts at THPRD

There was a perception among some participants in the staff focus groups that there was a clear need for an organizational focus on diversity and inclusion efforts in the district. One participant stated,

"I don't know, I've been around for a lot. It seems to me that we're playing catch up and they should have been doing this years and years ago as far as incorporating – now they're adding Spanish to job descriptions now, which they should have done a long time ago for frontline people and it just seems like we're playing catch up now and it's a big thing to catch up to."

Other participants in the staff focus groups expressed a lack of clarity about what diversity and inclusion means for the district and where the diversity and inclusion effort was headed. In addition, at times, focus group participants were unclear about who they were serving and what interventions were needed to accomplish inclusion. One participant shared a sense of frustration about a lack of clear guidance,

"...that we go out and reach underserved populations, but no one even told us what underserved populations were."

Some focus group participants expressed a frustration with the lack of clarity around current diversity and inclusion efforts, with one participant saying,

"It's just really the assumption that means English not as a first language and low income and Spanish speaking, but we didn't know exactly where those people were or what they needed, it was just...serve them."

Additionally another focus group participant described her need for clear guidance and institutional support,

"I have not been given any kind of special training, resources, or help to understand how to make outreach and to a specific culture, specific person."

Other focus group participants grappled with the issue of defining how diversity and inclusion is defined at THPRD. One participant stated,

"I think really the clarity of who is the diverse population we're trying to reach out to? Is it age groups? Is it ethnic backgrounds? Is it different languages? Is family versus people...without kids?"

Focus group participants expressed varying degrees of support for existing diversity and inclusion efforts within THPRD. Some focus group participants indicated a possible tension with new district policies regarding language competencies for new staff members. One participant indicated,

"I think it's really hard for us to hire Spanish-speaking people [for certain programs] ...because most of them came from poverty-stricken areas, that's why they came to the United States, and they're here to survive and so it's not something that's ingrained."

In addition, staff focus group participants perceived an emphasis on inclusion and diversity efforts for the Hispanic population. These existing efforts were perceived in different ways. One participant stated,

"Spanish population...I think it's a higher population and there are more within that population who have more limited English speaking skills is why we tend to focus more within that as opposed to other populations."

Another participant mentioned the following in regard to internal hiring practices,

"If you can speak Spanish, you have a little check mark on your application. We don't hire that many full time staff, so all of us who don't speak it, I would totally take a Spanish class. I actually told our human resources person that...[because] I'm here for quite a few more years instead of my replacement [having] to maybe speak Spanish."

Variation among Centers

Focus group participants discussed their observation of the variety of ethnic and cultural populations served at different THPRD centers. They emphasized that each center serves different populations and different approaches may be required to meet the needs of community members at each location. In addition to a call for greater understanding of the differences among THPRD facilities, focus group participants expressed a desire for more specific demographic information pertaining to their specific center. For example, one participant stated,

"I feel like there's a big emphasis [on] Hispanic outreach right now, but I feel like we actually see more of the Asian and Indian populations [at my center]."

The same focus group participant went on to say,

"Also, I don't think we've ever been really given the demographics of Beaverton and exactly what the population is that our exact city has. Are we...trying to get the minorities or extra cultures that we know our city even has percentage wise?"

Another focus group participant responded to the expressed limitations of the demographic numbers for the district,

"Those numbers are there, but they're not anything that's applicable to what you're trying to do as a center."

Another focus group participant described variations in ethnic and cultural populations throughout the district,

"I know that people in the south part of the district versus the north side of the district are completely opposite....If you look at who's taking swim lessons at the Sunset pool versus who's taking swim lessons [elsewhere], that kind of stuff, it's completely different. That's where I think that we [need] to look at...the specific center and say "who's in your neighborhood?"

Internal Communication

Focus group participants discussed issues with internal communication and the experience of not receiving information evenly across the organization. One participant noted,

"A lot of times they have tools and you find out about it three months later from a random conversation with a random person and it's like, wait a minute, when did you change Google so that the translate is available to any[one]?"

Additionally, another participant stated,

"Or six months later you realize they're like 'why didn't you do this?' and I like [never] heard of that in my life. It just never trickled down. We're doing it this way now? Okay."

A different participant noted,

"A lot of the big changes that happened in the district are made by executive members or management-level people, but they don't often stop and do what we're doing today and talk to the middlemen and our front line staff because they're the ones who see all the strengths and weaknesses."

Community Partnerships

Focus group participants discussed the importance of forging partnerships with overlapping jurisdictions and community organizations. Specifically, they highlighted the importance of having collaborative relationships with the Beaverton School District and the City of Beaverton.

One participant described that the time constraints and budget pressures on the part of the School District changed the nature of the relationship between the School District and THPRD over the years. She noted,

"They've done a lot of budget cuts in the last three years, so people that they've had in those positions over the years, those positions no longer

exist, so unfortunately those things are falling through the cracks, unintentionally because [the current staff] don't have [the] time."

These pressures have created stress on previous partnerships. One participant noted,

"It's straining our relationship to work with them or [to] provide services for them..."

One focus group participant reflected on the historical dynamic the district has had with the Beaverton School District over time,

"I can see that our communication dynamic with the school district, [be]cause it is one of our biggest partners and those are the populations we're serving, but I know even when I started with the park district, we had a much stronger relationship with them in terms of even just simple things like advertising and promoting our programs. It used to be as simple as literally driving down to their central office and put it in their intercampus mail and it went out to all the kids. Now they have all these flyer review policies and you've got to submit by this timeline and so on and so forth and then when you get approved, then you [got to] drive to every school. So it's a lot of time and energy on anyone of the programmers to actually even just get the information to the schools."

Staff focus group participants described the role community partners could play in collaborating with THPRD in its diversity and inclusion efforts. Focus group participants also discussed their perception of difficulties involved in current efforts to develop a network of community partnerships. One participant stated,

"We don't have a way to communicate or organize or keep track of these partnerships either. You might have a really great partner that would work for my outreach, but we have no way besides calling everyone and asking, are you working with this person? There's no one facilitating those partnerships."

Another focus group participant remarked on the difficulty of identifying community partners,

"I think one of the things they've really struggled with is trying to find community partners, because other people in Portland are [likely] to go to the Hispanic Outreach...but there isn't that in Beaverton. So we started looking towards the churches, because we can get a little bit more outreach into specific communities through churches, but...Beaverton is set up a lot different than our surrounding communities."

Focus group participants reflected on the need for a more integrated relationship with the City of Beaverton,

"We don't really interface with the City of Beaverton at all either and they're the ones who have all of the social programs and connections. People would think to go to their city if they needed socially to get involved or to get help and because we're a special district...we're part of our city, but we're not really our city."

Another focus group participant reflected on the potential for sharing resources with other community partners,

"The school district has translators. They have a lot of those resources that we could maybe financially support to make it accessible to us, but at the same time, when school's out in the summer, keep your kids involved, keep them engaged."

Several participants reflected on the nature of lateral community partnerships. One participant stated,

"We have these great partnerships on executive levels, but we don't have partnerships or we don't get to give our executive levels feedback of what they could include in our partnership that would help from the top down. They [the executives] were in our positions 30 years ago and our community is not now what it was 30 years ago."

Another participant reflected on the condition of intergovernmental agreements to sustain existing partnerships,

"...30 years ago, they were real good partners, they talked to you, they did this. That's why they can do their stuff up top, but they don't realize the level has changed, because we're going yeah, we can't do the same program that we did 20 years ago using a[n] agreement [from] 20 years ago. That's what we are looking at...our agreements...do we have anything in writing?"

Community Needs Assessment

Methods

The community needs assessment focus groups were built upon the program review focus groups of internal staff members. Based on the 5-year estimates from the American Community Survey as well as the Tualatin Hills Park and Recreation District Demographic Portrait & Population Forecasts 2010-2030 document, the six largest ethnic groups in the THPRD area were selected for a series of focus groups.

While it is recognized that ethnicity is only one dimension of diversity, this provided a starting place for investigation. Additionally, a brief survey in which the participants indicated their age and gender was also collected during the focus groups to provide an idea of some demographic background on the participants (included in Appendix G). It must be noted that these were collected to inform the researchers about participants and are in no way representative of the population in any statistically significant manner.

As detailed in Table 3, the six focus groups held included the following populations: Middle Eastern/North African, Hispanic, Korean, Indian, Chinese and Vietnamese. Many individuals who participated in the groups were immigrants, but participants were not exclusively immigrants. Also, participants were asked to self-identify with the groups during the recruitment process.

Table 5 Focus Group and Date of Focus Group for Program Review

Focus Group	Date	Number of Participants
Middle Eastern/North African	May 10, 2014	6 Participants
Hispanic	May 17, 2014	6 Participants
Korean	May 22, 2014	5 Participants
Indian	May 24, 2014	4 Participants
Chinese	May 27, 2014	5 Participants
Vietnamese	June 10, 2014	7 Participants

The focus groups were held in English, with the exception of the Hispanic focus group which was performed in Spanish. However, the participants were given the opportunity to converse in their native language and then help the moderator to understand the conversation along the way. This most often occurred where there were points of confusion or disagreement among participants and provided for a more nuanced discussion of these points.

The focus groups were composed of a mix of THPRD users and non-users. Participants in the focus group were recruited using several mechanisms beginning in April 2014. First, announcements were distributed to all THPRD centers which asked THPRD facility users to participate in a focus group. Second, the team from Portland State University's Center for Public Service canvassed the area which THPRD serves with flyers announcing the focus groups and talking with community members about the format of the focus groups. Third, informal community leaders were identified and asked to call upon others in their community to participate in the focus groups. The third option proved to be, by far, the most reliable for gathering participants.

The participants RSVP'd directly to the Portland State University team or to the convening community leader. They were informed that the focus group would last approximately two hours, and like the program review focus groups the actual time varied between an hour and a half and two hours. The participants were also informed prior to the focus group that there would be refreshments available, they would receive passes for their family to participate in a drop-in activity at THPRD, and there would be a raffle for a fifty-dollar gift certificate to Fred Meyer at each of the focus groups.

Focus group participants were asked a series of questions related to their experience with recreation in the area and with THPRD (See Focus Group Script in Appendix C). The questions allowed for the participant to answer specifically about their experience with THPRD and their experience with or desires for recreation in general so that focus group participants familiar with THPRD could answer as well as people who were not familiar with the district. Participants who were unable to attend the focus group as well as identified community leaders were given the option of filling out and emailing a questionnaire directly to the Portland State University team (Appendix D).

The format of the participant focus group was generally interactive and included a number of activities. One activity, aimed at setting a consistent group awareness of THPRD activities, asked the participants to mark which activities they were aware of the district offering (see Appendix E for list of activities provided to participants). Participants were then asked to highlight those activities which they or their family participated in with THPRD. The results of this exercise, while not generalizable to the population, are shown in Appendix F.

The sessions were tape recorded and transcribed. The transcripts were then coded using the codes developed from the program review focus groups while also allowing for new codes to emerge.

Community Needs Assessment – Findings

The primary themes which emerged from the community stakeholder focus group discussions were (1) positive perception of the district, (2) outreach and communication strategies, (3) accessibility issues facing community members, and (4) an uneven sense of belonging. In addition, within the discussion of accessibility factors, every focus group discussed the presence of three primary barriers to participation: language, scheduling/lack of time, and cost. In addition, there were other barriers to participation which were unique to individual groups which are detailed below.

Positive Perception of the District

The participants in the community stakeholder focus groups expressed a sense of gratitude for the depth of programs and activities offered by the district. THPRD was perceived as a valuable community service. One participant compared the list of services offered by THPRD to services offered in their home country,

“I’m very surprised because there are many, many activities, so it’s very different from my country. And actually, this area...kind of looks like an urban area, but it supplies this...nature park and skate parks...So it’s very difficult to expect these kinds of services in my country, so I was surprised – I am very surprised to see that they provide the different kinds of services here.”

Focus group participants were also excited to share their input and be heard by the district. One participant commented,

“[The focus groups are] a good chance to give...our opinion...So this gives us a voice...a voice heard.”

Each group requested information and a follow up to the district’s inclusion and diversity efforts and any progress on implementation of policy changes. Nearly every focus group had a participant who offered to volunteer to serve as a cultural liaison between their community and THPRD.

Outreach and Communication Strategies

Each community stakeholder focus group was asked by the research team to define the three primary preferred outreach and communication methods for their group. Focus group participants were asked to identify how they first

learned about THPRD and how they continue to find specific information about THPRD programs and services. In addition, focus group participants were asked to imagine how other members of their community might be likely to find information about THPRD and how these community members may search for follow up information about THPRD on an ongoing basis. Table 6, below, identifies the top 3 answers among focus group participants for each of the six focus groups.

Table 6 Top Three Preferred Outreach and Communication Methods

	Activity Guide/Flyer	Word of Mouth or Signage	Internet	Community Newspaper in Native Language	School/Church	Television Ad
Hispanic		X		X	X	
Korean			X	X	Church	
Middle East/ North African	X	X				X
Chinese	X	X		X		
Indian	X	X	X			
Vietnamese			X	X	Both	

➤ **Activity Guide/Flyer**

Focus group participants identified the activity guide as an initial means of gaining awareness of THPRD services when they first moved to the area. The activity guide served as a starting point and additional information was acquired by going to a physical center for more information or searching for specific programs online. Many focus group participants described the activity guide as an overwhelming experience and the process of looking through the book as confusing and difficult to navigate. One participant commented,

“[The activity guide] is really confusing...So I think even though I have the [activity guide], I still like to search online because I know that it is available for me online.”

Another participant stated,

"It's too much to go over and it's not helping...It's impossible...Yeah, so aquatic classes, where do you go? I see that it does have an index kind of, yes, it does have an index but maybe it should be more upfront."

Other participants tried to brainstorm how to make the class listings more accessible, saying,

"We're all saying it first should be reorganized from the people who are using it. Not the people who is administering it."

And,

"Maybe change to like a newspaper...then clearly at the top you could just show your kids program, you just go through the [newspaper], maybe costs less, so it's like a newspaper...But monthly, because I don't think they can put all of this on a newspaper, even how big it is."

Other focus group participants emphasized the possible role the activity guide played in raising awareness about THPRD's programs and services to people who may be new to the area.

In contrast to the activity guide, focus group participants described small postcards and flyers as helpful tools in building awareness about THPRD programs and other current news.

"I actually like flyers...I need to see right in front of me...But like flyers, it's just like strong information, like what time, where. Then after that, I will just search that flyer title in the Internet. That's how I usually do it."

Participants from the Middle Eastern/North African group emphasized the value a small flyer could have in raising timely awareness about THPRD programs. Participants in the Vietnamese focus group and the Hispanic focus group discussed getting flyers given to their children at school and how helpful these were for highlighting their awareness of upcoming THPRD activities and classes. A few focus group participants suggested using language on flyers or postcards to indicate a cultural/language liaison or some form of translation service for specific languages to signal the presence of language resources at THPRD.

➤ **Word of Mouth/Signage**

Participants in several of the focus groups discussed the strong influence of "word of mouth" or trusted referrals from family, friends, and other community members, in raising their initial awareness of THPRD programs and services. Focus group participants disclosed the use of referrals, or "word of mouth" was the most common source of information about THPRD programs and activities.

One participant shared,

"I think that starting, we made a lot of friends with people who already had connections with this organization, and they told us, 'Oh, there's going to be a sports camp. Go sign up,' and so I'd go. Then I'd find out about something else that was next."

In addition, the use of "word of mouth" was a key communication method which influenced actual participation in THPRD programs. Another focus group participant remarked

"Because at our age I realize, we like to hear someone close [share] feedback, they give you the interest because there is a certain trust or there is certain desire that you want someone to do it with you. So with word of mouth it helped to...encourage you to do it instead of just by yourself."

Many participants also identified the signage and location of THPRD centers and parks in their neighborhoods as important early means of discovering the district.

➤ **Internet**

Focus group participants described using the internet in a few different ways for information gathering. Participants in the focus groups primarily described internet usage as a method for finding specific programs of interest and as a way to participate in the online registration process. One participant described their process for finding classes,

"I can search a lot of information through Internet, and when I choose activities, normally, I don't use [the activity guide]. I search it through...the recreation website. I input their keyword, and I can search very easily."

Some participants described using the THPRD web page and online activity guide as a way to translate the written material at their own pace online. A few participants discussed using a search in a web browser to find recreation programs in general and therefore learning about the district in this way. However, internet usage was primarily a means of finding specific information among participants who were already familiar with THPRD programs and services.

"But again, you have to know that you want to go there, that's the difference, I think, between online and the book. You know, online you say, oh, I want to go and find out what they have."

The use of email, in particular, was identified as a way to provide interested community members with information about activities. One participant reported the following when asked how they like to receive information,

“For me, via e-mail. It’s easier because I check it every day.”

In a different focus group a participant said,

“Email is the fastest way to tell people this is what's new or chang[ing].”

Another participant in the same focus group followed-up saying,

“they create people's interest, because sometimes people are so [busy]. You offer something quick, new, Zumba. It's a little quick, they say, oh, I could have Zumba with a short distance, why not.”

Internet usage was not a primary method for everyone with some groups reporting little internet usage for information gathering, such as the Middle Eastern/North African focus group who explicitly stated that the internet was not a channel of communication they used and the use of the internet would not be helpful in getting information out to their community.

➤ **Community Newspaper**

Many focus groups suggested advertisements in a community newspaper as an important communication outreach channel for their communities. Focus group participants emphasized the role community newspapers may play in reaching people of all ages in their communities. Many feel that older populations, in particular, find newspapers to be a good source of information. One participant described that seniors in particular rely on newspapers for community information,

“[Seniors] collect newspaper every week because they want to really [be] able to read the update for the local...the newspaper becomes something, you know, when they're home, they [can] get some feedback from far away and also from the close to see all the events happening.”

In addition, focus group participants suggested advertisements in community newspapers would have much more reach if they were in the native language of the target audience.

“I do think if [THPRD] were able to [advertise] in both languages you probably will get a wider demographic of people. People who [have] live[d] here for a long time, who are familiar with the language as well as those who [are] just getting [here] more recently.”

Additionally, one participant described how an advertisement written in a community newspaper in her native language may be more effective for raising the awareness of community members who are just finding out about THPRD services. It is important to note that this focus group participant demonstrated fluency in English and in her native language. She stated,

“...Well for my personal experience, when I first came here I wasn’t familiar with English so whatever source of Vietnamese [language materials] out there tends to grab my attention more than English because I tend to feel too lazy to read English.”

➤ **School/Church**

Schools and churches were defined by focus group participants as trusted authorities for receiving information about quality recreation and educational programs in the area.

“Most people in the same area tend to meet at the same church I guess, they go to the same school.”

Another participant added,

“But more than anything, it really seems like a good idea to me to send out [information]...from the school, to send [flyers] to the kids.”

The use of school/church as a communication channel included the suggestion to use formal communication materials, such as flyers and direct outreach in schools. In addition, focus group participants emphasized the effectiveness of informal word of mouth communication from school and church staff, teachers, and fellow parents and church members.

➤ **Television Ads**

The Middle Eastern/North African group suggested the use of television ads to raise awareness of THPRD programs and services. One focus group participant in this focus group suggested evening and late night ads would be the most effective method of communicating information about specific programs because this was the time her parents watched T.V. after their long work shifts.

As a comparison, the focus group participant described the popularity of a local amusement park (Oaks Park) among people in her community, due to the late night T.V. advertisements in which this business invests.

Accessibility Issues Facing Community Members

Focus group participants were asked to identify barriers to their participation and to imagine barriers to participation people in their community may have. In some discussions, focus group participants would clearly define a barrier to participation for themselves – such as a cost barrier. In other cases,

participants defined a barrier they observed for other community members, such as transportation services for less mobile seniors. The table below indicates the barriers to participation in terms of accessibility factors. If there is an X in the box, the focus group participants explicitly defined that accessibility factor as a barrier to their participation in THPRD programs and services. In some groups, participants discussed the accessibility factor in terms of how it might affect other people in the community. In these cases, the group identified by the focus group is documented in the table.

Table 7 Accessibility Factors Expressed by Focus Group Participants

	Language Barriers	Cost Barriers	Scheduling	Transportation	Safety	Cultural Differences
Hispanic	X	X	X	X		
Korean	X	Perception of costly activities	X			X
Indian	For Elders	For Temporary Residents	X	For Elders		
Middle Eastern/ North African	X	X	X	X	X	X
Chinese	X	Perception of costly activities	X	For Elders		
Vietnamese	X	Perception of costly activities			X	

➤ Language Barriers

Each focus group discussed the role of language barriers in accessing information at THPRD. English as a second language was described by focus group participants as a barrier within multiple contexts. THPRD users reported language barriers were a challenge when trying to search for initial information about THPRD programs and services. One participant called on the district to do more translation,

“But then I noticed, the [activity guide], I got it, they only have it in English and in Spanish. It's not enough. The [district] ha[s] to serve the people [who] pay tax. It's not only the [people who] know English – since the population changes and we have people [who] can do the translation.”

However, participants in the focus groups also described language difficulties as a barrier which might impact how community members find out about programs, how easily community members are able to register for classes, and their ability to participate in programs and activities. One participant described the language barrier in the classes themselves,

"Another one of the things I think is that there [should] be more people who speak our language, like at the classes. Like for example...cooking classes. There are also sewing classes, and they're in English, and... like me, in fact, I would like to take those classes, but I don't go, because of the English."

Also, participants reported language barriers as being a greater challenge if there were any intercultural conflicts which needed to be resolved with a program or service. Participants assessed the role of language barriers in their communities and many participants stated that they thought language was a barrier for participation for people in their communities.

"Getting general information is easy, because like just checking schedule, services, we can use the Internet, but when they face like problem[s] or issues, we are facing a language barrier because like we don't know where to find more information, how to solve the problem. So then when we are trying to communicate through English, it might be a big barrier."

Participants also noted language barriers associated with signage, saying,

"There are signs, but it's almost apologetic saying, 'Don't feed the ducks because it will lead to water contamination.' I feel that that should be more noticeable and more visual because if you're looking at having it in Spanish and English...it's better to have something visual which communicates this [to all participants]."

Focus group participants expressed a desire to for communication materials to be in native languages and the existence of a THPRD liaison for language and cultural resources was emphasized by several groups.

➤ **Cost Barriers**

While not every focus group defined the cost of THPRD programs or services as a barrier to their participation, the role of the cost in accessing services and programs was a significant discussion overall.

Each group discussed activity fees for drop in activities such as swimming and/or recreational activities as cost prohibitive. Some focus group participants remarked that activities were getting more and more expensive and suggested the cost of activity fees be reduced or stabilized. For parents with children, and especially large families, activity fees were discussed as a significant barrier to

participation. One participant described her reaction when asked to participate by others,

“That’s why oftentimes, since the family is big, I say, ‘Oh no, that’s tough.”

In a family with many children, even a simple activity such as going swimming once a week was too expensive to afford with multiple children. This discussion intersected with a lack of awareness regarding the family assistance program.

“When I brought my daughter when she was like three years old, to ballet class, I had to pay, because I didn’t know how to get those scholarships. Those resources, low-income. I didn’t know until she started school, so that was when I started finding out they could help me with the payments, but I brought her for two years and I was paying.”

A longtime THPRD user in the Vietnamese focus group described her opinion towards activity fees. She stated,

“Well, I mean it’s probably not something you can change immediately, or ever, but you know that’s one of the reasons why – well it didn’t stop me from coming but it was a kind of shock. Because [activity fees] are four times higher than what [they] used to be.”

A participant in the Chinese focus group also commented on the dramatic increase in activity fees, stating,

“The pricing [could change]. I have other friends, I asked them what would be their feedback, they said don't raise the price anymore because for the last couple year[s] I’ve play[ed] tennis, it used to be [reasonable], only just wait a couple years and then now the price is almost up to double.”

The Hispanic and the Middle Eastern/North African focus groups discussed the cost of programs and activities as a barrier to participation. The reasons for the cost barrier in these groups were primarily due to a lack of awareness about the family assistance program, multiple children in the family, and the presence of other significant barriers that also have costs associated with them such as transportation.

The Korean focus group participants were surprised at the additional fees for programs in addition to their taxes. Participants in the Korean focus group stated they felt the cost of camps for children were too high, but these costs did not prevent them from enrolling their child in THPRD programs. Participants in the Vietnamese focus group discussed the change in the cost of activity fees over the years and how this was surprising.

The Indian group expressed a clear understanding of district finances and the purpose of activity fees as a revenue source, while at the same time expressing concern activity fees and facility rental fees may present be a barrier for temporary residents from India and for the senior population.

➤ **Scheduling/Time Barriers**

Each focus group discussed scheduling/time barriers as a significant barrier to participation. Scheduling and time issues also overlap with other themes such as programming and accessibility factors such as transportation access. Some participants described scheduling/time barriers as the inability to participate in programs due to existing family or work commitments. In some cases, participants reported having multiple jobs or long work hours which prevented their participation in recreation programs or prevented their ability to drive their children to recreation activities or programs. One participant noted that a family member was unable to participate due to a parent's work schedule,

"For example, with my nephew, his father works all day, from 9:00 to 9:00 at night."

Another participant commented that their schedule was keeping them from participating in activities they enjoy,

"They say that when you prepare well for a [job], you always only work 8 hours. Office work." But in reality, the participant reported working "from 6:00 to 8:00."

The other way in which scheduling/time barriers were described is when there were limited programmatic offerings which fit with the schedule of the current THPRD user. For example, an open activity time which is only offered in the early morning or a popular class which is hard to get enrolled in.

"I did look at this book last year, my friends gave to me. It is a lot of class, yeah. I was going, taking some class, then I look at the times. Most are like the evening times... I would like some class in the daytime."

Some focus group participants discussed the role of the online registration process as inherently limiting in regards to popular classes. These participants described trying to register for classes via the online process and classes filling up after a minute for popular courses. If classes fill up quickly for popular courses, this process may exclude residents who do not have internet access or are less familiar with the THPRD registration process and policies.

➤ **Safety Concerns**

Two focus groups explicitly discussed safety concerns as barriers to participation. The Middle Eastern/North African focus group discussed a number of safety concerns. Specifically the group expressed an uncertainty about participating in unfamiliar activities and in activities which involved potential exposure to risk or physical exposure. Several focus group participants in the Middle Eastern/North African group expressed a desire to participate in swim activities which would accommodate the cultural and religious practices of Muslim women in regards to modest dress.

Participants in the Vietnamese focus group shared their concerns about inadequate lighting around facilities at night which made them feel unsafe. One focus group participant described their specific concerns,

“...in the parking lot are when I use the facility until like 10:00 pm, when they close, when I walk out if it rains, then it tends to be kind of dark.”

➤ **Transportation Barriers**

Transportation barriers were discussed by several of the focus groups. Participants in the Hispanic focus group discussed the difficulty of transporting children to recreational activities due to schedule conflicts. One participant described her challenge,

“That’s what used to happen to me with him, because – but it’s because he wants to go from one place to the next. He wanted to go to the skate park, he wanted to come to the gym, and to just be taking him and bringing him back? No. Sometimes he’d come on his bike.”

Transportation barriers were prominent in the Middle Eastern/North African focus group due to the time public transportation requires and the amount of exposure to possible interpersonal risk while using public transportation.

The Indian and the Chinese focus groups discussed transportation barriers for the senior members of their communities. A participant in the Indian focus group asked,

“I just got thinking after hearing...about the low participation of senior[s] and then people around the community....Is there any service like a bus that would pick people [up]? Because apart from their adult children, they might be unable to drive or something, and are dependent on family members to do that. So, I don’t know if there is any kind of service?”

The participants in the Chinese focus group discussed the role grandparents play in caring for their grandchildren in their community, and described how a lack of access to transportation may prevent the participation of both elders and

the children in their care. These participants thought there was a lack of information about transit options for seniors in their communities.

➤ **Cultural Differences**

A few notable cultural differences arose from focus group discussions. Participants in the Korean focus group discussed difficulties in communicating with their child's teacher when cultural differences arose in regard to behavioral expectations. The parents in this focus group described this as a difficult intercultural conflict to manage due to different cultural expectations regarding child age behavior and the language barrier added to the difficulties in managing conflict.

"I understand, and I think that maybe the Korean people want to live here, they should adjust, adapt to this environment, but many people come here and stay just two years or some years, and go back. So during this, their stay is very challenging, actually very difficult, just is about to adapt, and then go back."

The participants in a focus group spoke enthusiastically about the ability to access nature and to learn about nature. They shared,

"My son, he...participates in preschool here, so one of the courses, they went to a nature park. There's a field trip, yeah. Actually, I know there was a nature park here, but I didn't go at the time [before this], so it was really great, actually...I saw very unusual small animals and wonderful things."

The Middle Eastern/North African focus group described several cultural differences specific to the needs of Muslim women. At the same time, participants in the Middle Eastern/North African focus groups expressed a strong interest in participating in recreation opportunities if they modifications could be made to some activities to protect religious and cultural norms. In the words of one eager focus group participant, who would like to overcome barriers to participating in THPRD programs and services said,

"We are missing out on a lot of opportunities!"

An Uneven Sense of Belonging

Participants in each focus group expressed a desire to see other participants at THPRD who shared their cultural backgrounds. Participants in the Middle Eastern/North African focus group wanted to find a way to find out if other Muslims would be present in classes or at activities, asking,

"Is there going to be somebody like me [at the activity]?"

The presence of members of the same cultural group appeared to reflect a desire for understanding and a sense of belonging. Each focus group, in some way, expressed a desire to see more people from their cultural group at THPRD activities and programs.

Some focus group participants shared a variety of experiences of unfriendly and/or unhelpful service at centers which made them feel unwelcome at THPRD. For example, a participant in one focus group described a frequent encounter with a front desk employee at the THPRD center she frequents,

“[They] barely smile at you when you ask too many questions...when I come in she doesn’t really pay any attention to me until I speak...while she speaks to me she does her own thing on the computer...it doesn’t have to be a five star hotel service or anything, but, you know, at least give me some attention.”

A participant in the Hispanic focus group reported dismissive behavior by the front desk staff at a center he frequents regularly. This participant’s family was disappointed to learn they qualified for an in-district rates and the family assistance program, because they discovered they have been paying out-of-district rates for many years during the focus group discussion. The family attributed their lack of awareness to the fact that no one had reached out to them to find out about their needs when they came in to the center.

Another participant reflected,

“That’s the other thing I’ve noticed. Like when I bring a new friend, they don’t tell him anything. They just say, “Oh, is it your first time?” And they charge him \$10. And then I tell him, “No, so if you sign up here, they’ll only charge you \$3.50.”

Examination of Existing Demographic and Quantitative Data

Methods

The demographic data used for this analysis was gathered from various sources, including:

- 2012 Tualatin Hills Park & Recreation District Survey prepared by RRC Associates, Inc.
- Tualatin Hills Park and Recreation District Demographic Portrait & Population Forecasts 2010-2030 by the Portland State University Population Research Center
- Community Awareness Benchmark Survey June 2011 by Riley Research Associates
- American Community Survey by the U.S. Census Bureau

The demographic information was analyzed prior to the start of this current research and some highlights are included in the background information section of this report. The changing demographics of the area served by THPRD are a critical motivator of this project. Due to the current and future expected changes of the population served by THPRD, the district has a responsibility to reach out to these developing communities to better understand their needs and experiences. Thus, the demographics, while not collected during the course of this project, provide an important backdrop to the intention of the report.

Additionally, the 2012 Tualatin Hills Park & Recreation District Survey provides opinions from a random sample of THPRD users. The questions asked pertain to satisfaction with service, perceived importance of various district offerings, suggestions for improvement, and other topic areas of interest to THPRD. After the community member focus groups were conducted, this data was reviewed a second time in order to check for places of overlap and possible points of disagreement that point to further research opportunities.

Many of the responses from community members in the focus groups did align with the previous research and the comments from focus group participants can help to add context to these views. However, there are also specific points which community members in the focus groups seem to differ from the random sample. A brief discussion of some of the points of overlap and disagreement are detailed in the following section.

Examination of Existing Demographic and Quantitative Data – Findings

The 2012 Tualatin Hills Park & Recreation District Survey provides complimentary information to this research, allowing us to compare the opinions expressed in the focus groups to a larger sample. There are, however, several caveats. First, the results from the 2012 survey are not broken down by race or ethnicity. In order to perform a statistical analysis based on race or ethnicity, the populations would likely have to be oversampled in order to reach a statistically generalizable sample size. It is unclear whether the data from the 2012 survey could reliably be analyzed for race and ethnicity specific information, or an additional study would be needed. Second, the qualitative data obtained using focus groups is not directly comparable to that of survey data. Thus, while the key findings and the themes identified in the 2012 survey and the current focus group research may overlap and be informative, direct comparison of the two studies is not possible.

The 2012 THPRD survey indicated that fifty-five percent of respondents deemed ‘providing positive activities for youth’ as one of the top five issues for the district (p. 6). This sentiment was again echoed in the current focus groups. The participants in the community-member focus groups specifically asked for programs that parents would find educational and at the same time enjoyable for children. In addition to ‘fun’ activities, participants in the community-member focus group looked for programs that combined enjoyable activities with things like nature education, civic engagement, and support for classroom learning.

Eighty-one percent of respondents of the 2012 Survey indicated that they value the availability of park and recreation opportunities (measured as a 4 or 5 on a 5 point scale) and eighty-seven percent of those who had experience with THPRD in the last 12 months rated their service a four or above on a five point scale (p. 8). However, a few activities were rated below a four. These include the operation hours, promotions and publicity of programs, the signage, the price and user fees, and the promotions and publicity of parks and trails (p. 10). These are all concerns that were also brought up in the community-member focus groups. While each ethnic group expressed different ways they experienced these barriers, it highlights the need to address these accessibility issues for all communities.

The respondents to the 2012 Survey also indicated that swimming programs are of high importance and that their needs are being met relatively well (p. 47). However, this figure masks the experience of some ethnic/cultural communities. For example, focus group participants for the Middle Eastern/North African background expressed that their needs were not being met. The 2012 Survey respondents also indicated in their open comments that that they would like to

see increased pool hours and other program offerings. A similar desire was expressed by the community-member focus group participants.

In the 2012 Survey, senior programs were rated below the midpoint in terms of their importance. The Elsie Stuhr Senior Center in particular was ranked second lowest in importance overall, ranking just above the skate park (p. 47; p. 18). In the focus group discussion, however, the senior programs were explicitly cited as an important opportunity offered by THPRD. There may be variation in the perceived importance of this resource among ethnic groups.

Among the suggestions and open ended comments on the 2012 Survey, the responses echoed some of the issues highlighted by the focus group participants as well. Particularly, the desire for email communications was a common sentiment both among focus group participants and the Survey respondents (p. 53). The desire for THPRD to improve pedestrian bike paths and walking paths was also raised in the focus group discussions (p. 34). Particularly, the focus group participants called out biking and walking activities in reference to activities they like to do as a family.

Recommendations

Based on the information obtained in this study, the research team identified four categories of recommendations. They are: (1) develop cultural competence within the organization, (2) make facilities and services more welcoming and accessible, (3) review program ideas and opportunities, and (4) strengthen community partnerships. We suggest these recommendations are most effective when they are implemented in the order we present. Implementation of these recommendations will likely take place over a multi-year period with ongoing efforts to maintain the work after the initial implementation.

1. Develop Cultural Competence within THPRD

The discussion with the staff members during the internal program review process as well as the community members during the community needs assessment, suggest that the first step the district needs to take in addressing diversity and inclusion is to focus on developing cultural competence within THPRD. Reaching out to diverse community is, of course, also necessary and an important effort that needs to be performed by THPRD. However, in order to make the community outreach effort a success, THPRD employees at all levels need to have a certain level of cultural competence. If the community members are met by THPRD employees who are unconsciously or consciously incompetent, the outreach effort will be undermined.

Therefore, we recommend that the district take a step to assess employee cultural competence at all levels and establish an internal baseline for tracking purposes. Based on the assessment, it is recommended that the district engage in developing and implementing cultural competence development training for all employees including management.

We recommend considering the following components in developing the training content. First, the training should provide the employees a clear understanding of the importance of diversity and inclusion in the workplace and how it relates to the mission of THPRD. It should focus on getting buy-in from all employees to value diversity and inclusion. Second, the training should educate the employees on the district's rules and policies and related to diversity and inclusion. Third, the training should provide the district employees a clear understanding of what cultural competence in the workplace entails, and the tools for development. This requires substantive internal discussion on the definition of cultural competence. We recommend a definition of cultural competence that is broad and transcends language skills and culture/ethnicity specific knowledge. Cultural competence should be seen by all district employees as an attainable and essential professional competence that supports the organization.

In delivering the training, it is important to include sessions where participants share their experiences, challenges, and help problem-solve. Empowering employees to become active participants in the conversation may aid in bolstering buy-in throughout the organization. Also, providing employees with resources to perform their job in a culturally competent manner, such as the telephonic translation tool that has recently been adopted, will support this process

It is also crucial to build in the long term assessment plan to organizational development in cultural competence over time. It is recommended to plan periodical assessments of employee cultural competence and compare against the baseline and track the changes over time. These assessments should also inform other possible interventions for cultural competence development.

Working with a Hatfield Resident Fellow to shepherd this process through the organization would be particularly useful. Hatfield Resident Fellows are employed by Portland State University and are highly skilled recently-graduated graduate students who are able to support organizations in need of particular areas of expertise. A Fellow would also bring an outside perspective to the organization, so they can be viewed as more neutral should difficult conversations arise (see Appendix H for a sample project description).

2. Make Facilities and Services more Welcoming and Accessible

Once the cultural competence development has begun to take shape, then attention can be shifted towards addressing the facility and service-related issues. This recommendation is based on the ideas raised by the community-member focus group participants for making changes to the facilities and services that would make them feel more welcomed. Similar ideas are also identified in the literature and the program review.

Focus group participants noted that they would like to see better language services at the district facilities. Services which perform translation over the phone, in the absence of a staff member who speaks the language, was mentioned as particularly useful for situations which require nuanced discussions such as conversations about cultural differences affecting participant satisfaction. This particular addition has recently been adopted in the FY15 budget.

Other suggestions related to language services include having staff members or volunteers onsite as a cultural liaison. The liaison would not only provide special language services but also address some cultural norms and expectations and be a bridge between the district and the patrons. The cultural liaison should be someone who understands some specific culture, the language, and THPRD.

Volunteers with cultural knowledge and language skills who have had experience navigating THPRD may be able to be tapped into to work as cultural liaisons.

The Hispanic group was able to identify staff members who had played this role in the past as an example of cultural liaison personnel at the district. The relationship they developed with the Hispanic community is seen as a valuable asset by the community members. Other focus group participants observed that the Spanish-speaking population had somebody to reach out to and hoped for a similar contact in the future.

The focus group participants recognized that even if such a community liaison for different cultural groups were hired and/or identified in the district they may not be available at all times at all places for the patrons who need services. The focus group participants suggested publicizing the schedule when the cultural liaison personnel are available for the community members. They said even if the cultural liaison is available just one day a week, it would still be a useful service to the community members and will greatly enhance the community access to the district's programs.

Extending the idea to have a cultural bridge between the district and the community, another suggestion would be instituting a Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Committee or by emphasizing more diversity and Inclusion in existing committees as a high priority for committee growth and development.. A new committee or stronger representation on existing advisory committees could help the district strategically develop and implement plans that make facilities and services more welcoming and accessible. These advisory committees could also participate in other aspects of the process such as cultural competence development for employees.

A recommendation by the community focus group members specifically related to facilities was changing the "language-based" signage to "symbol- based" signage. Signage in graphic symbols that can be understood regardless of cultural and language background will reduce the burden of language translation for the signage. Rather than a statement translated multiple times, a graphic symbol can be an efficient means of communication with a large number of language communities. However, as cautioned by others in the literature, the symbols must be carefully crafted so it can be universally recognized.

As a way to improve accessibility and attracting new patrons to the district three ideas were identified as potential effective means of introducing THPRD to the community and, likewise, the community to THPRD. First, inviting people to celebrations to engage with THPRD and the community. This approach was demonstrated to be useful in New York. An opportunity for the community to see the facilities in a low expectation environment for free or minimal charge allows THPRD to be known to a greater degree in the community. Also, these could be paired with cultural events that celebrate a variety of cultures. Events

such as “cultural nights” where residents share their cultural traditions with other members of the community can be organized at the district’s facilities.

Second, an orientation process was repeatedly cited as needed for new members to the district. Focus group participants shared that when they used the district’s facility for the first time or brought friends or family for the first time, they did not know what to do. Periodic orientation nights that celebrate the district and its benefits and opportunities could help new and current users better understand what is available at the district. Additionally, this would be an opportunity for the district to setup more specialized orientations based on particular interests, such as “Getting The Most from Your Family Assistance.” These events may also be co-hosted by other local community partners as a way of increasing awareness. Both the orientation and community party ideas would also help to build an email list or database with new community member information included.

Third, partnering with realtors or apartment managers to provide information as people move into the area is seen as an important way to reach new patrons. A “welcome basket” could include information such as transportation options, a drop-in pass, or a flier which highlights a small set of activities or events. Patrons suggested something that is quickly absorbed by the occupant as well as alleviating initial barriers to participation as critical to share with new community members as patterns are harder to change once a routine is more established.

3. Review Program Ideas and Opportunities

With the employee cultural competence development and measures for making facilities and services more welcoming and accessible in place, the district should start examining ways to increase the attractiveness of the programs to the diverse communities. We suggest this sequence because we believe that without culturally competent employees and welcoming facilities and services, the diverse community members may feel unwelcome or unable to communicate effectively with staff about their programming desires.

The community-member focus group participants note that the greatest barrier in participating in THPRD programs is the timing of the programs. Participants suggest expanding the hours of key activities like cricket, badminton, and swimming. In particular, a swim time that is exclusive to females would alleviate one of the barriers to participation expressed by the Middle Eastern/North African focus group participants.

In particular, participants supported the notion of classes and programs which were integrated into the district in a way that does not necessarily single out their communities. For example, participants thought THPRD hosting a cultural

night or cultural event is a great way to share their community practices with their others, not just within their cultural group. As another example, classes held in a particular language, like Spanish, could be a great opportunity for others in the community to experience the language. The key here is that the classes are part of the regular curriculum that are integrated into the programs in the district rather than advertised as “special” which otherwise may give participants the impression that they are different from everybody else.

In order to advertise for new and existing programs, the preferred methods recommended by the focus groups were discussed for each group. These modes of communication included: the activity guide/flyer, word of mouth, internet, newspaper, schools/churches, and TV. Advertising this way may help fill classes that are of particular interest, like women’s only swimming. Community focus group members pointed out that not all program information would have to be fully translated. Including a short translated note about language service capacity and contact information where the community members can obtain more information in the language they desire, would alleviate some barriers to program participation. Additionally, if there is a cultural liaison in the district, it should be explicitly noted and encourage community members to contact the cultural liaison. The knowledge about the cultural liaison may allow for people who may have been on the fence about participating the opportunity to ask questions that make them feel more comfortable or safe.

Another programming element that was discussed in several focus groups was the availability of different levels of programming. Some participants would have liked to participate in activities, but the level of skill demonstrated by other participants was beyond their comfort. For example, participants expressed wanting to participate in badminton but hesitated to do so because they did not feel as skilled as other participants. Setting aside time for beginning badminton, bicycling, and tennis were all mentioned. This may also apply to other activities where there are large, competitive, groups of people monopolizing open sessions.

In order to assure better programming, it is important to systematically evaluate patron satisfaction and program impacts. In particular, instructors found themselves struggling to communicate the progress they saw in the classroom in regards to soft skill development (socializing, etc.) to parents and others who may be focused on the task at hand (e.g., learning to swim). Having some mechanism by which to measure these items at a broad level and opportunities for sharing experiences of instructors within THPRD and with the community may help to raise awareness of the added benefits participation in THPRD’s programs can have for development. This information should be paired with systematic collection of demographic information about participants so that the district can better understand the needs of particular groups of THPRD users.

4. Strengthen Community Partnerships

The district can make advances in their effort to enhance diversity and inclusion by partnering with other jurisdictions and community organizations. The partnering of the district with local schools, the City of Beaverton, and Washington County could yield benefits for all parties. For example, a cultural celebration jointly hosted by multiple organizations would benefit all. Partnerships could be used more effectively to advertise THPRD programs throughout the school district and churches, co-host events, and develop a stronger understanding of the work done by organizations in the area to better serve the needs of residents.

In the process of recruiting focus group participants, it became clear that organizations in the area are excited to support THPRD and community members want to be involved with THPRD. Providing multiple outlets for involvement through partnership will be one way to further the diversity and inclusion agenda without putting the entire responsibility on the district. Additionally, THPRD can work with non-profits in the area and raise awareness of THPRD generally and THPRD's welcoming attitude specifically among hard to reach populations. For example, tree planting parties or park maintaining parties may be prime opportunities to connect with new community members by partnering with non-profits who work in the field.

Beyond partnering with specific organizations, the district could have opportunities available to partner organizations for facility use. While this may already be an option, advertising it and making it part of a strategic partnership vision can help to move the partnerships from ad hoc events to vibrant collaborations. Citizens may also have an interest in this type of facility use. For example, a meeting room in a particular facility could be available for public meetings during certain specified hours. Citizens could then reserve the space for a variety of uses on a regular basis. Also, THPRD could display strategic programs and information about the district as a way of advertising to groups who have decided to use the space.

Additionally, a data collection project sponsored by multiple entities which works to collect a database of resources for staff or to be shared with the community would be useful for multiple reasons. First, staff would be able to direct participants with questions to the appropriate entity. For example, an instructor at THPRD may be asked about ESL classes. If that instructor has a reliable list of resources in the area, they would be able to direct the participant to the appropriate contact. Second, organizations could review the list for partnership opportunities as well as to avoid overlap where unnecessary. The database formation could be a collaborative effort with other community partners as well as a participatory effort in which citizens also help with resource information sharing.

Appendices

Appendix A: Structured Interview Questions for Best Practices Review

Who Performed the Interview _____

Date of Interview _____

Person Being Interviewed _____

Email _____

Phone _____

Jurisdiction _____

Website for Jurisdiction _____

What are the kinds of things you are doing to engage diverse groups of people in your program?

What seems to be working well and what are some of the things that are not working as well?

What have you found to be successful methods for communicating with minority groups?

What do you see as the success factors for engaging diverse groups of people in your program?

What determines your success and how do you measure your success?

What do you see as some of the barriers to engaging diverse groups of people in your program?

Ideally, given unlimited time and resources, what are some of the things that you would like to do to better engage diverse groups in your program?

Do you know any other programs or organizations that are doing a good job reaching out to multicultural groups?

Anything else?

Appendix B: Focus Group Questions – Program Review

Focus Group Script

- Ask for informed consent and permission to audio record.
- Explain “Discussion” in Focus Group Discussion
- Explain the purpose of the focus group.
- Facilitators introduce themselves.
- Ask participants to briefly introduce themselves.

0:00~0:30

1. Could you please describe the kinds of things you see THPRD doing to engage diverse groups of people? Could you please describe the kinds of things you are doing to engage diverse groups of people in your program? What seems to be working well and what are some of the things that are not working as well?

0:30~1:00

2. What do you see as the success factors for engaging diverse groups of people either for THPRD generally or in your program specifically? What do you see as some of the barriers to engaging diverse groups of people either for THPRD generally or in your program specifically?

1:00~1:15

3. Ideally, given unlimited time and resources, what are some of the things that you would like to do to better engage diverse groups in your program? What are some of the things you would like to see THPRD doing to do to better engage diverse groups if resources were unlimited?

1:15~1:30

4. Anything else you would like to add?

Appendix C: Focus Group Questions – Community Needs Assessment

Focus Group Script

- Collect brief demographics: age, gender
- Ask for informed consent and permission to audio record.
- Explain the purpose of the focus group.
- Facilitators introduce themselves.
- Ask participants to briefly introduce themselves & how long they have lived in Oregon.

0:00~0:15 [awareness & use + setting awareness for group]

1. Please review the list of activities and check the items that you are aware of being offered by THPRD (The things that you know or think THPRD offers). This is not a quiz, we are not programmatic experts, we simply want to get a feel for your awareness of THPRD services. Also, feel free to partner together to go over the list if you would like.
 - a. Now, please highlight the items which you or your family have participated in the past or are participating in currently.
 - b. What are some of the things that you have done with THPRD? What are some of the things that you were aware of but didn't participate in (drill down: why not)? THPRD offers all the items on the list, are there any that are a surprise to you? Is there anything that you did not really pay attention to in the past that you might be interested in exploring further, why?

0:15~0:40 [communication strategies]

2. How did you hear about the things that you checked off? Let's make as long of a list as we can. Word of mouth (or other) seems to be very popular but somebody had to get the ball rolling. What are some of the ways you could imagine yourself hearing about a THPRD activity? (On flip-chart: List)
3. Let's imagine something you may be interested in either for yourself or a family member, it might be something you have done before or it might be something that you just found out about today. Think about how you might hear about it and using the stickers (each person gets 3) place a sticker next to the top three ways you might like to hear

about the activity (on the flip chart). What might work for you? How you like to get your information.

- i. Why response A has a lot? Response B has not so much? What are some of the reasons these work better than those? Feedback about sticker distribution.

0:40~1:05 [barriers and opportunities]

4. Assuming you have found out about all these activities, what are some of the activities and programs that you see as fairly easy for you or your family to participate in? What are some of the things that you think might be more difficult for you or your family to participate in? Is there anything you would like to do with THPRD that you do not think THPRD offers (wishlist)?

1:05~1:30 [group unique attributes and emphasis]

5. (Write on card) We are talking to a range of different groups throughout this process. What would you say is really critical or important for us to know about your group? What can you tell us about yourselves? What do you want THPRD to know? Share with group.

Appendix D: Community Member Electronic Questionnaire

Focus Group Questions for Community Members (Email Option)

Engaging and Serving Diverse Communities: Tualatin Hills Park and Recreation District Inclusive Outreach and Diversity Development Project

THPRD – Introduction

The Tualatin Hills Park and Recreation district (THPRD) is reaching out to community members in order to better understand their needs and experiences in accessing parks and recreation programs. This effort is the first phase of THPRD's diversity and inclusion effort. We are seeking your input for this community needs assessment.

Awareness and Use of THPRD programs:

THPRD provides a wide range of activities. After reviewing the list [presented in Appendix E of this report], what are some of the items that you think people in your community are aware of being offered by THPRD? What are some of the activities that you think are most utilized by your community?

Communication Channels and Outreach:

How do you think members of your community find out about THPRD programs and activities?

Please make a list of all the communication channels you think members of your community might use. What do you think are the top three ways members of your community access information about parks and recreation programs? Is there anything else you would like to share about communication channels in your community?

Community Barriers and Opportunities:

What are some of the activities and programs that you see as fairly easy for community members and their families to participate in? What are some of the activities and programs that you see as fairly challenging for community members and their families to participate in? Please explain why you think they are either easier or more difficult for community members to participate.

Community Needs:

We are talking to a range of different groups throughout this process. What would you like us to know about the members of your community? What do you think is really important for THPRD to know about the needs of members of your community?

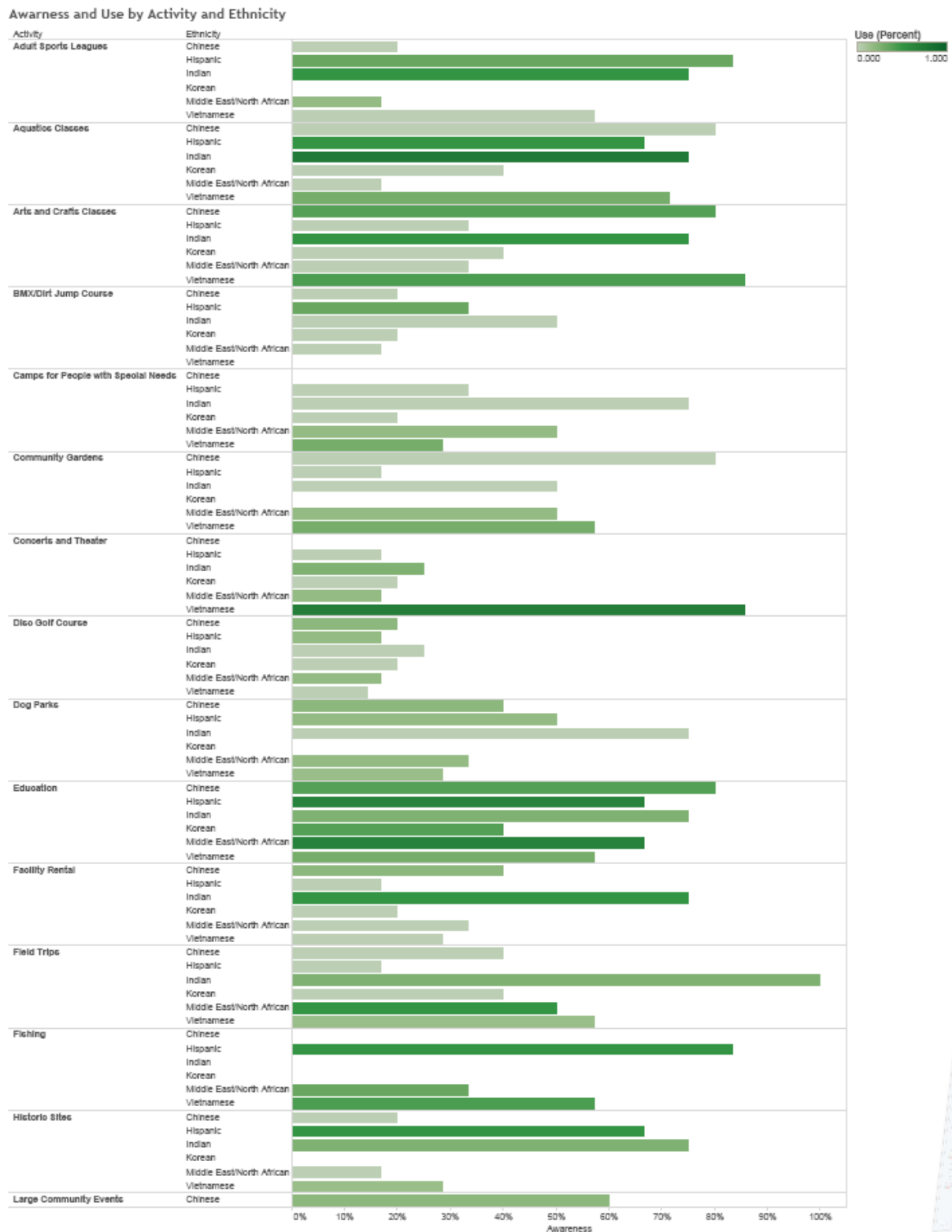
Appendix E: List of Activities

Center for
Public Service

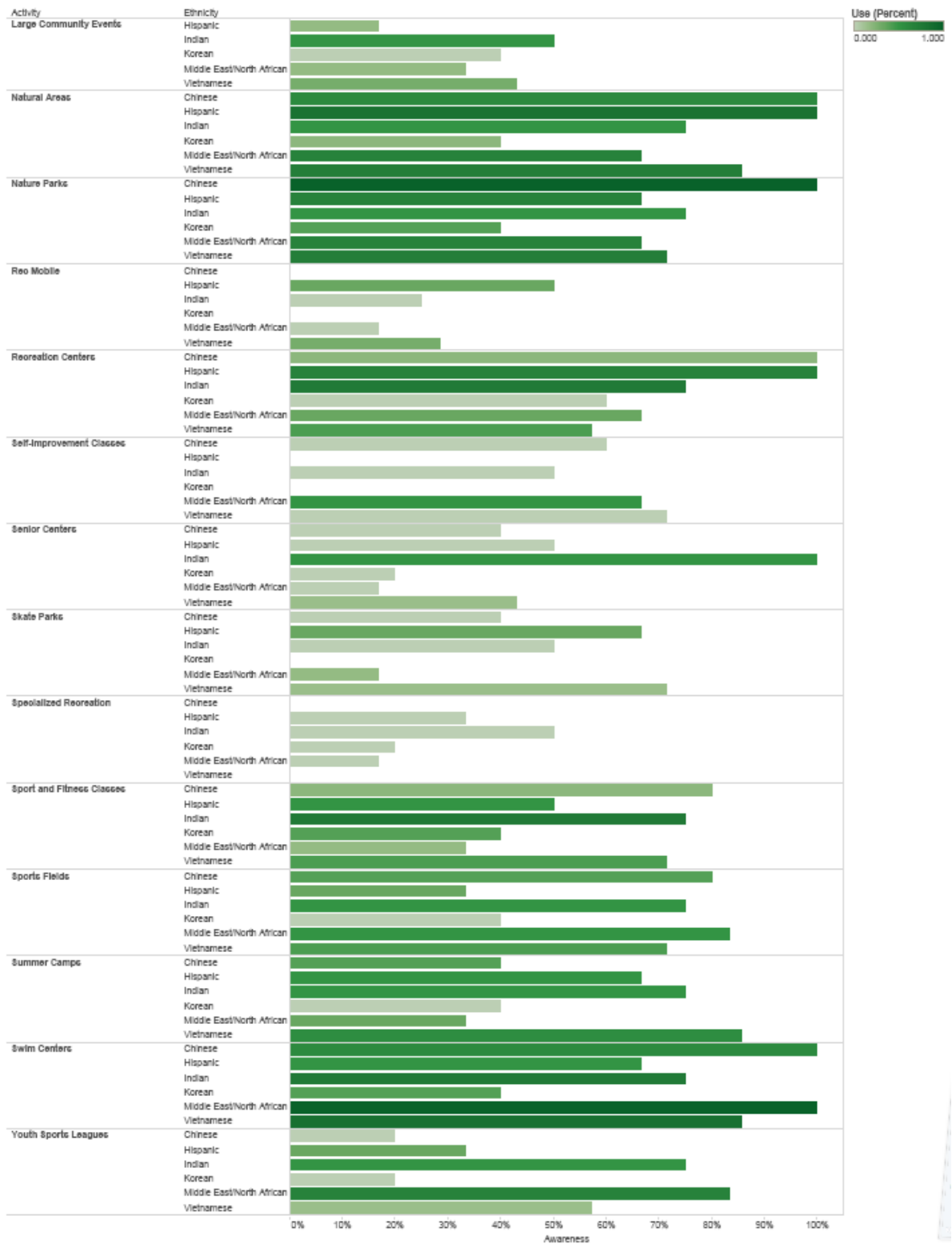
Check the services that you know THPRD provides

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Natural Areas | <input type="checkbox"/> Education |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Swim Centers | <input type="checkbox"/> Self-Improvement Classes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Recreation Centers | <input type="checkbox"/> Summer Camps |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Senior Centers | <input type="checkbox"/> Rec Mobile |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Nature Parks | <input type="checkbox"/> Arts and Crafts Classes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sports Fields | <input type="checkbox"/> Sport and Fitness Classes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Adult Sports Leagues | <input type="checkbox"/> Field Trips |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Youth Sports Leagues | <input type="checkbox"/> Fishing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Skate Parks | <input type="checkbox"/> Facility Rental |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dog Parks | <input type="checkbox"/> BMX/Dirt Jump Course |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic Sites | <input type="checkbox"/> Disc Golf Course |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Community Gardens | <input type="checkbox"/> Aquatics Classes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Camps for People with
Special Needs | <input type="checkbox"/> Concerts and Theater |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Specialized Recreation | <input type="checkbox"/> Large Community Events |

Appendix F: Awareness and Use Results



Awareness and Use by Activity and Ethnicity



Appendix G: Participant Demographics

Gender Makeup of Each Focus Group:

Focus Group	Male	Female
Middle Eastern/North African	0	6
Hispanic	2	4
Korean	1	4
Indian	2	2
Chinese	0	5
Vietnamese	2	5

Age Categories (in years) of Each Focus Group Participant:

Focus Group	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+
Middle Eastern/North African	1	1	1	2			
Hispanic	3		3				
Korean	2		2	1			
Indian				1	2		1
Chinese				4	1		
Vietnamese	1	1	2	2			

Appendix H: Hatfield Resident Fellow Statement of Work

The purpose of this SOW is to outline the project(s) that will be performed by the Hatfield Resident Fellow, the products that will be delivered, and the responsibilities of both Agency and the Fellow. The work described in the SOW shall reflect new or unique project specific activity not day-to-day operational tasks. This SOW must identify the requirements and deliverables of the work at hand in sufficient detail to ensure the interests and obligations of both Parties are understood prior to the start of the Fellowship.

Name of Fellow

Phyusin Myint (Tentative upon contract signing)

Name of AGENCY

Tualatin Hills Park and Recreation

Agency Address

15707 SW Walker Rd, Beaverton, OR 97006

Project Description & Objectives

The Hatfield Resident Fellow is tasked with carrying out a portion of the recommendations of the *Engaging and Serving Diverse Communities: Tualatin Hills Park and Recreation District Inclusive Outreach and Diversity Development Project*. Specifically, the Fellow will move forward recommendation number one – Internal Development of Cultural Competence. This will include reviewing the report findings and supporting documents as well as conducting a review of relevant literature that will aid in project development. Options for the contribution of the Hatfield Resident Fellow to move the project forward include:

1. Facilitating a 'controversy with civility' discussion about diversity and inclusion efforts at THPRD with small group employee open discussions and dialogue around the topic of diversity and inclusion using a non-threatening approach. Additionally, this process may aid in bringing more voices into the processes moving forward providing an opportunity for greater buy-in throughout the organization.
2. Carrying out a diversity planning initiative to develop an internal vision of diversity and inclusion at THPRD. If supported by the district, this may be done in conjunction with a community led diversity committee composed of community members. The goal of this facilitated

conversation is for the entire district to develop, understand, and feel connected with the vision of diversity and inclusion expressed by THPRD.

3. Suggest and oversee training and discussion activities for employees at all levels to express their experience, challenges, learn, and ask questions about how to act on the vision for diversity and inclusion at THPRD.

The Hatfield Resident Fellow may take up one or more of these suggestions depending on the consultation with the district and the individual Fellow strengths.

Completion of Training Institute at Portland State University

Both Parties agree that the Fellow shall be released from their normal project duties for a 4-day orientation and training institute (on topics such as performance measurement and management, public sector financial management, e-government, and sustainability) held July 7-10, 2014 at Portland State University.

Other Salient Information

Jillian Girard will be available to the Fellow on an as-needed basis to discuss the report process and findings.

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